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amendment, and I believe that Senator Jensen will address that here briefly. Thank you.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Erdman. You've heard the opening on the advancement of LB 54. There are committee amendments, as stated. Chairman Jensen of the committee, you're recognized to open on those amendments.

SENATOR JENSEN: Thank you, Mr. President, members of the Legislature. First of all, I want to apologize for my voice. I've got a head cold. Maybe I'll see Dr. Head. (Laugh) The amendment deletes the specific number of training hours required for foster care providers. But foster care providers are still required to receive training. And I'll quote right from the statute: directly related to the skills necessary to care for children in need of out-of-home care, including, but not limited to abuse, neglected, dependent, and delinquent children. The amendment leaves the specific number of training hours to rules and regs adopted by the department. Testimony at the public hearing on LB 54 expressed concern about potential harm to children from inappropriate placements if the department were permitted to waive training requirements for relative foster care providers. The committee amendment still permits a waiver of training requirements for foster parents who provide care only for relatives. But the amendment requires waivers to be granted by the department on a case-by-case basis, and only after an assessment of the department of the appropriateness of the relative foster care placement. The department indicated in their testimony to the committee that they...that that would be their procedure. The amendment also requires annual reporting by the department to the Health and Human Services Committee on the number of waivers granted and the total number of children placed in relative foster homes. The committee agrees that permitting a waiver of training requirements in cases of relative foster homes is appropriate, and believes that the waivers would encourage more relative foster placements for children. But the committee was also concerned that such placements be in the best interests of the child, and that the committee and the Legislature be kept informed as to how many waivers are granted. I would ask for the adoption of the committee amendment. Thank you, Mr. President.